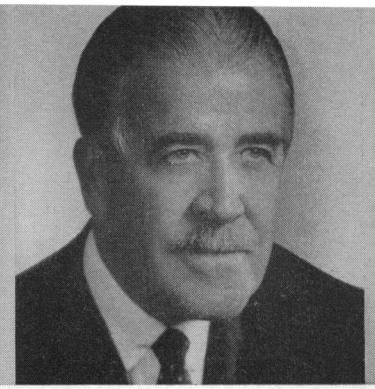


# The President's Page



## The Physician and the Community

SEVERAL NATIONAL SURVEYS have shown that the individual physician ranks next only to members of the United States Supreme Court in public esteem. Throughout the United States, at the local level, the physician is probably the most respected member of his community.

There are some good reasons for his stature. First, of course, is his professional skill as a healer. He is the man his neighbors go to for help when they are in pain.

He is most likely to be the most highly educated person in the community. He has had at least eight years of education beyond the high school level—and often much more.

He is above average in intelligence and stamina or he would never have survived the rigid tests of the training program leading to an M.D. degree.

These factors give the physician a prestige that is unique in American life. Whether he likes it or not, they make him a natural leader in the community.

And some physicians apparently don't seem to like it. These are the ones who still live and practice in an ivory tower, believing that is service enough. It isn't enough.

Theodore Roosevelt said: "Every man is, first, a citizen of some community." As a leading citizen, in the eyes of his fellow men, the physician should accept willingly the civic responsibilities that accompany his prestige.

The California Medical Association has always encouraged its members to take an active part in community affairs. Physicians have made themselves

heard for years at the national level when they have been threatened with the federalization of medicine.

That's an important issue, but the town or city you live in is important too. I am convinced that the physician should stand shoulder to shoulder with his neighbors and assume his proportionate share of civic responsibility. Membership in a medical society should not relieve him of membership in his church, the local chamber of commerce or service, civic and other such organizations. It should not exempt him from his duties as a citizen.

We all know how vital it is that the personal relationship between physicians and patients be maintained. (Some of our critics would say it should be restored.) I can't think of a better way to maintain or improve that relationship than by getting involved in community problems and projects.

Through these activities you will learn a great deal more about your patients and neighbors than you ever could discover in your office. You will find out about the realities of their daily lives—how they live and what they think.

I can attest this from many years of work in Beverly Hills with the Chamber of Commerce, the Red Cross chapter, Rotary and other organizations. My experiences have been of tremendous value to me in learning how the people there make their community work. They have given me a liberal education in good citizenship.

I urge you to participate as fully as time allows in local civic activities. Our traditional American freedoms are under attack today at both the national and local levels. Too often the voice of medicine is heard only on national matters.

Let's speak out at the grass roots, too. A community thrives on balanced leadership from all its segments. The medical profession must help if that balance is to be achieved.

*James C. Doyle*